

ANPSA BRACHYCHITON & ALLIED GENERA STUDY GROUP

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Health : For once, I have a good excuse for a late newsletter. While running around in early June 2012 getting the last of my plants & odds & sods moved to Toowoomba, I was unloading the ute at Toowoomba when I fainted, & Annabel correctly diagnosed a heart attack. Five minutes later an ambulance arrived, & soon I was having a rest cure at the Toowoomba Base Hospital, where my elder son is chief anaesthetist. They ran countless tests & told me I had been lucky & had had only a mild heart attack. However, it was caused by my right aorta valve partly closing, & if it closed much more I would be history. So after an angiogram & more ultrasounds, in Brisbane, I joined the queue for an open heart operation, & Annabel wrapped me carefully in cotton wool. Luckily a vacancy came soon, & I got a new bovine valve inserted in late July, & got sent home 4 days later. All fine, but I was as weak as a kitten for a while. The medicos reckon my arteries etc are in pretty good shape if I behave myself, so I am trying to persuade my good wife not to feed me lettuce & lentils.

Climate : In some ways, the Toowoomba climate is more benign than Greenbank, at least at my new place, where the 'urban heat island' effect, plus a fringe of large *Cupressus torulosa* (West Himalayan Cypress, more often miscalled Bhutan Cypress) trees, keep the winter minima a whisker above 0 degrees C. There are more cold grey days, some with fog, & the western fringes of Toowoomba do frost. Go a few km out of town in any direction but east, & frosts are frequent & severe, with the small towns to the west & south quite often having the dubious honour of coldest town in the state for that day. Going east there is the well-wooded escarpment, & cold air falls downhill.

July 2012 was cold, with minima around 2 degrees, rising to about 8 in August. Maxima were low in early & mid-September, rising to the high 20s in late Sept. & early October, then minima down to 5 degrees in mid-October, with snow in Stanthorpe & New England (13th was the coldest Brisbane October day since 1957). Then a normal summer for late Oct. Coolish much of November & December ; snow in the Victorian Alps in early December.

Jan. the 7th 2013 was the hottest day on record, Australia-wide ; but a balmy 17-28 here. Hobart reached 41.8 on the 4th, one degree above the previous (1976) record. And 48.2 on the Eyre Peninsula & 47 in Adelaide. On January the 18th, it was 19-35 here, but the hottest day ever in Sydney, 45.4. Then in late January, there were catastrophic floods in Bundaberg, & substantial floods in Roma, Warwick & Brisbane.

All of February to early May was cool & rainy (or overcast), with maxima in the low to mid 20s. The rest of May, & June, was cooler, with maxima below 20; the 22nd of May was Brisbane's coldest May day since 1980 (16.7 degrees).

Flowering : Jasper Lode, which ceased its 9-month flowering on 10-3-'12, resumed flowering in Greenbank after rain on 19-3-'12. A small potted clone at Toowoomba resumed flowering in mid-Sept., as did my white *megaphyllus* & leafless parts of *albidus*. The *acerifolius* Waldron's Giant began a 6-week flowering in early October, followed in late Oct. by Sankowsky's *muellerianus* hybrid & by *garrowayae*, tangerine *megaphyllus*, & *bidwillii* clones including Red Baron & Little Ripper. In early December some young Robin Hoods were briefly in flower, & Sankowsky's hybrid flowered for a month. By January 2013 Clarabelle & Koll Creek, both *B. x vinicolor*, were in full flower, plus Jasper Belle & about 15 clones of *excellens*, all at my friend Laylee's large garden on the western fringe of Toowoomba. The *vinicolors* flowered superbly for one month, & Jasper Belle flowered very well for 3 months, with larger flowers than Jasper Lode. They had not done as well in earlier years, & I suspect have just improved considerably with maturity.

They did well at Merv's place last year also, & his plants are a year or two older. By early April only the tangerine *megaphyllus* was in flower, as it still was in mid-June as I type this ; it had been leafless for 3 months. Some *bidwillii* plants are now nearly leafless.

At Brent Vieritz's place at Beachmere, one precocious 10-month-old seedling of Red Baron x white *megaphyllus* had a pink 6 cm flower in late November. There were 70-odd seedlings in the batch.

Pink-peduncle trait : Pods of *bidwillii* x 2 different (Dark Knight & BV1) clones of presumed *excellens* showed the bright pink colouration on the half of the peduncle (pod-stalk) nearest the pod. I have seen this before in numerous forms of *bidwillii* when pollen of plants with *discolor* genes are used on them ; see newsletters 20, 21, 25, 28, 29 & 39. The colour slowly fades to brown over 3-4 weeks as the pods mature. Presumably this part of the peduncle is controlled by 'embryo' genes & the other end by maternal genes. Or a substance diffuses from the immature pod but only reaches so far. Plants which trigger this reaction include Clarabelle, Jasper Belle, & the *excellens* clones mentioned above. I have not had a pure *discolor* on hand for some years, & nor have my main collaborators Merv & Brent, so I have not checked to see if *discolor* primes pink peduncles. I will be surprised if it does not.

Brachychiton book : At long last, I have the book approaching completion. I was hoping to have it printed by the time of the ANPSA biennial conference on the Qld. Sunshine Coast, but it may be slightly later. I am mainly waiting on details of the WA species from my WA collaborators, as it would be a pity to leave some of them out. I am making no attempt to give fine botanical details of flower components & so on, as that is covered in the botanical literature, & I am more interested in horticultural details. Habitat descriptions are given in enough detail so that people will hopefully know what species they are likely to encounter where. Most species are shown in leaf, in flower, & so on so that they can be identified from any geographical neighbours. I include no pretty pictures in this newsletter, but later in this year you will get a heavily-discounted book, or maybe a free one if sales are OK.

I would be glad to receive images of any of the more unusual species or hybrids, via email, CD or letter, plus any information people can give. The book will soon require

revision, as more hybrids come into bloom, & the botanists put out their Sterculiaceae (or Malvaceae) data for a Flora of Australia volume, & the more recently discovered species get better documented. So late entries may well find a home ; put your pens & cameras to work.

Deliveries : In late March this year I took a load of *bidwillii* Cania Gorge (a nice form from inland central Qld) & Tangerine Belle & Robin Hood & *collinus* to the Canberra National Botanic Gardens. Did not see as much of the gardens, & Canberra in general, as I would have liked, as it poured rain & sleet the entire time. Shall take more types of *bidwillii* & a few other things they want, next summer. Around February I sent a large consignment of assorted brachy species & hybrids to Ian Evans, a study group member & landscaper from near Bendigo. Ian is involved in organizing the 2014 APS/SGAP get-together (usually grevillea-oriented) in Victoria, & next year it is focused on brachys & their relatives like *commersonias* & *Thomasia* & *Lasiopetalum* & *Keraudrenia*. Ian wanted plants he could grow on to look OK for display for the event. If I have time I might assemble a few of the tropical relatives like *Helicteres*, *Melhaniania*, *Melochia* & *Hildegardia* from Kakadu.

Best wishes to everyone for the coming financial year.

Kerry.